

PART II.—PUBLIC HYGIENE.

I have the honour to submit my annual report for the year ended 31st March, 1936.

SECTION 1: VITAL STATISTICS.
(Exclusive of Maori unless otherwise stated.)

POPULATION.

The mean population of the Dominion for 1936 was estimated to be 1,492,344. This total represents an increase over the corresponding figure for the previous year of 6,520, or a percentage increase of population of 0.44.

BIRTHS.

The births of 24,837 living children were registered in the Dominion during 1936, as against 23,965 in 1935. The birth-rate for the year was 16.64 per 1,000 of mean population. The general course of the birth-rate during the last five years is shown in the following table:—

Births (Number and Rate) in New Zealand, 1932–36.

Year.						Total Number of Births registered.	Birth-rate per 1,000 of Mean Population.
1932	..	..	..	..	..	24,884	17.09
1933	..	..	..	..	..	24,334	16.59
1934	..	..	..	..	..	24,322	16.47
1935	..	..	..	..	..	23,965	16.13
1936	..	..	..	..	..	24,837	16.64

This is the first occasion since 1920 that an increase instead of a decrease in the rate has been recorded. The rate is, however, much too low for the future to be viewed with equanimity. The natural increase (excess of births over deaths) was 11,781 persons, or only 0.79 per cent. of the total population, as compared with an increase of 0.80 per cent. in 1935.

Loss during the year in the migration balance accounts for the increase in population being only 0.44 per cent., a decrease of 0.16 per cent. on the figure for 1935.

DEATHS.

The deaths registered during the year numbered 13,056, an increase of 839 over the figure for 1935 (12,217).

Crude Death-rates.

Year.	Crude Death-rate per 1,000 Mean Population.		Year.	Crude Death-rate per 1,000 Mean Population.	
1931 ..	..	8.34	1934 ..	..	8.48
1932 ..	..	8.02	1935 ..	..	8.22
1933 ..	..	7.98	1936 ..	..	8.75

Deaths from All Causes.

The total number of deaths was 13,056, the crude death-rate per 1,000 of mean population being 8.75. This is the highest crude death-rate since 1929, when the rate was also 8.75 per 1,000 mean population.

As the age and sex constitution of the population is constantly changing, comparison of rates may be misleading, except over a very short period of time. Standardization overcomes this difficulty, and renders comparisons possible over a long period of years. In the table below are given the number of deaths, the crude death-rate, and the standardized death-rate for the past six years. It will be noticed that whilst the crude death-rate for 1936 is the highest for the years given, the standardized rate is slightly lower than that for 1934, although considerably higher than that for 1935. The standardized rate here shown is based on the age and sex distribution of the population of New Zealand at the time of the census taken in 1911. The increase is further commented upon in the notes on the principal causes of death.

Crude and Standardized Death-rates, 1931–36.

Year.	Number of Deaths.		Crude Death-rate.		Standardized Death-rate.	
1931 ..	..	12,047	8.34	..	..	7.31
1932 ..	..	11,683	8.02	..	..	6.89
1933 ..	..	11,701	7.98	..	..	6.77
1934 ..	..	12,527	8.48	..	..	7.08
1935 ..	..	12,217	8.22	..	..	6.76
1936 ..	..	13,056	8.75	..	..	7.06

Still-births.

A still-born child is defined as one “ which has issued from its mother after the expiration of the twenty-eighth week of pregnancy, and which was not alive at the time of such issue.” Still-births have been compulsorily registrable in New Zealand since March, 1913. In 1936 still-births numbering 732 were registered, a decrease of 6 on the figure for the previous year.